

# GENITAL WARTS

Arizona Department of Corrections  
Health Service Bureau

Inmate Wellness Program  
HEP 1030- 01/06

## What are genital warts?

Genital warts are growths that appear in the genital and anal areas of the body and sometimes in the throat. They are caused by a family of viruses called the Human Papilloma Viruses (HPV).

Genital warts are usually firm, rough, and flesh-colored, grayish white, or pinkish white. They usually appear as thin, flexible elevations of the skin that may look like small pieces of cauliflower. Some warts, however, are small and flat and may not be easily noticed.

## How is HPV transmitted?

This is a sexually transmitted disease which has infected over half of the sexually active population of the United States. It can be transmitted by simple skin contact from an infected area making protection extremely difficult. Traditional safe sex methods such as condoms and protective films are not 100% effective. Any genital to genital contact is dangerous, as well as contact in which a hand has touched an affected area. Besides abstinence, the only totally safe means of protection is to have the warts removed prior to intimate contact. If diagnosed with HPV, immediately advise your partner(s) so they can be examined and treated. Genital warts usually first appear one to six months after contact with an infected person.

## How do I know if I have HPV?

In women, dry, painless, cauliflower-like warts can grow on the external genital folds, inside the vagina, or around the anus. Self examination as well as regular Pap smears can identify the presence of the virus.

In men, warts can grow on the tip or the shaft of the penis and sometimes on the scrotum, in the urethra (the tube that carries urine out of the body), or around the anus. Self examinations of the genital and anal areas should be done routinely. A scope may be used to check for warts in a man's urethra.

## Are genital warts dangerous?

Besides being unsightly, genital warts can lead to other problems including cancer. In women, warts can lead to birth defects. In men, warts may block the penile and rectal openings. If you have detected genital warts or believed you may have contracted the disease, **fill out an H.N.R.!**

## Can HPV be cured?

Warts can be removed by a doctor. However, the virus may hide in your body for years, or possibly for life. The warts may disappear without treatment but it is extremely unlikely. Once again, if you believe you have HPV the sooner you get treated, the better your chances of complete recovery.